

when our Convention met) have added great weight to the propriety of the conduct of Massachusetts. Two illustrious examples of highly respectable individuals in two of those states deserve particular mention, as well in honour to those gentlemen, as to sanction the decisions of the majorities in their respective states. The one is Governor Randolph of Virginia. This gentleman, who has long been esteemed for his many virtues as well as for his abilities, was one of the Delegates from Virginia in the General Convention at Philadelphia. He had objections to the constitution which made him forbear to sign it. So far as pride could be concerned, his wishes must have been opposed to the general adoption of the constitution without previous amendments, and it is believed if a few only of the states had agreed he would have persisted in this purpose. But when so many as eight states had agreed, and he saw the difficulty and danger of requiring so many states to tread back the ground they had passed, he nobly declared (I had not the pleasure to hear his words—I judge only of the substance from report) that it was now too late to require previous amendments, and that though he still thought amendments necessary, he would not endanger the union by insisting on them as a condition of adoption.⁴ He accordingly, with all the warmth of patriotic virtue, maintained the adoption of the constitution in the then situation of affairs as indispensably necessary perhaps to the existence of the union, certainly to its peace and security; and to the exertion of his great abilities it is not improbable Virginia may be in a great measure indebted for her present station in the union, and America at large for the subsequent adoption by New-York in consequence of her illustrious example. In that state, resides the other gentleman whose conduct I beg leave to state. Being at greater distance, I can only speak of him generally as a distinguished character by name, and who had been remarkable for his opposition to the new constitution. I mean Mr. Melancton Smith, who was a member of the late New-York Convention, and is said, in a debate on the subject of a conditional ratification, to have spoke to the following effect.⁵ Having declared his determination to vote against a condition, he urged “That however it might be otherwise presumed, he was consistent in his principles and conduct. He was as thoroughly convinced then as he ever had been, that the constitution was radically defective; amendments to it had always been the object of his pursuit, and until Virginia came in, he had reason to believe they might have been obtained previous to the operation of the government. He was now satisfied they could not, and it as equally the dictate of reason and of duty to quit his first ground, and advance so far as that they might be received into the union. He should hereafter pursue his important and favorite object of amendments with equal zeal as before, but in a practicable way, which was only in the mode